DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 197 PS 022 992

TITLE	Child Care and Development Block Grant: A Summary of State Use of Quality and Availability Funds.
INSTITUTION	Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (DHHS), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Oct 94
CONTRACT	105-92-1616
NOTE	12p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Block Grants; Child Caregivers; Child Development; Child Development Centers; *Day Care; Early Childhood Education; Elementary Education; *Federal Aid; Low Income Groups; Program Improvement; School Age Day Care; State Programs; Training Allowances
IDENTIFIERS	*Child Care and Development Block Grants; Grant Recipients; Monitoring; Program Characteristics

ABSTRACT

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) enacted in 1990 was intended to increase the availability, affordability, and quality of child care services for low-income families. This report provides an overview, state activities, and selected highlights of states' use of the 25 percent quality and availability funds sponsored in 1993. The purpose of the report is to help states learn from each other about options for improving child care quality and availability at the state and local levels. This information on states' use of CCDBG 25 percent funds was collected in 1993 during a series of regional meetings for child care administrators. The major state activities are described, including: (1) efforts to expand early childhood development programs; (2) before- and after-school projects; (3) child care resource and referral projects to improve the quality of child care; (4) grants and/or loans to providers to improve the quality of child care; (5) monitoring and enforcement activities to improve the quality of child care; (6) support training and technical assistance to improve the quality of child care; and (7) efforts to improve the compensation of child care providers. The report finds that, overall, the 25 percent CCDBG funds have been an effective tool for enabling states to support projects to improve the quality and expand the availability of child care services. (AP)

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CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT:

A SUMMARY OF STATE USE OF QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY FUNDS

Prepared for the
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services

under the
Child Care and Development Block Grant
Technical Assistance Contract
Contract No. 105-92-1616

October 1994

PS 022992

Preface

This summary provides an overview and selected highlights of how States use their 25 percent quality and availability funds under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). This information on States' use of CCDBG 25 percent funds was collected in 1993 during a series of regional meetings for child care administrators conducted by J & E Associates and Macro International Inc. It was compiled into a comprehensive, State-by-State report that was reviewed and updated by the State child care administrators in the spring of 1994. The report and summary are intended to help States learn from each other about options for improving child care quality and availability at the State and local level.

Use of this data has several limitations. First, State project descriptions vary in their level of detail. Second, financial data are not uniform in terms of the time frame reported. Third, for summary and comparative purposes, the report presents State project descriptions by the categories delineated in the CCDBG regulations. However, in practice, Grantees conduct activities that fall into more than one category. Finally, this report does not include activities that States fund with sources other than the 25 percent portion of CCDBG.

Child Care and Development Block Grant: A Summary of State Use of Quality and Availability Funds

Background

To increase the availability, affordability, and quality of child care services, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) was enacted in 1990. This program provides Federal funds to States, Tribes, and Territories (hereafter referred to as "States" or "Grantees") to support child care services for low-income families.[1] According to CCDBG regulations, Grantees must spend the majority of the funds on direct child care services, while reserving at least 25 percent of the funds to improve the quality and availability of child care services.

Under CCDBG, States have the flexibility to develop options for spending the 25 percent funds. At least three-quarters of the 25 percent funds must be used to increase the availability of child care services, by:

- establishing or expanding and conducting early childhood development programs;
- establishing or expanding and conducting before- and after-school care services.

At least one-fifth of the 25 percent funds must be spent to improve the quality of child care, including:

- directly operating or funding the development of child care resource and referral programs (CCR&Rs);
- making grants or loans available to child care providers;
- improving monitoring and enforcement of child care standards;
- offering training and technical assistance to child care providers;
- improving compensation for child care providers.

Grantees may spend the remainder of their 25 percent funds on <u>either</u> activities that improve child care availability or on activities that improve child care quality.

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[1] Most Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations are exempt from the 25 percent requirement. Tribal Grantees were not included in this report.

Summary of Findings

This section describes State activities to increase the availability and improve the quality of child care. Each subsection includes a narrative description of the common uses of CCDBG 25 percent funds and a chart highlighting specific examples of State activities. Although presented in separate sections, it should be noted that many State activities accomplish multiple goals. Projects designed to increase availability often improve quality; likewise, activities to improve quality often increase the availability of child care.

Increasing the Availability of Child Care Services

Early Childhood Development Programs. Virtually all of the States used CCDBG 25 percent funds to establish or expand and conduct early childhood development programs. In their efforts to start and expand services, Grantees developed alliances with community organizations such as the YMCA and YWCA, community centers, churches, synagogues, Kiwanis Clubs, and the United Way. Many Grantees chose to use the funds to expand existing early childhood development programs at the community level, such as Head Start and local public school programs. Others initiated programs through collaborations with organizations that were already active in the child care field, such as public housing authorities, State colleges and universities, non-profit and for-profit child care centers, and local public school systems.

The majority of Grantees targeted at least some of their early childhood development programs to specific populations. More than half of the Grantees chose to develop and expand projects serving infants and toddlers. Many invested funds in projects to serve children with disabilities.

The flexibility in the 25 percent portion of CCDBG gave Grantees the opportunity to target funds to community-specific needs. Several States funded early childhood development projects for teen parents, parents attending school, and homeless families. Others funded early childhood education curricula and materials to meet the needs of minority populations, such as migrant, Native American, and Hispanic families.

Examples of Activities to Expand Early Childhood Development Programs

- Establishing a child care center for 30 children whose parents are HIV positive or have AIDS and are unable to provide care during some part of the day.
- Providing comprehensive early childhood development services for children with disabilities, and parent training and health and mental health services to families.
- Establishing a center for adolescent parents and their infants on site at a high school.
- Purchasing equipment to enable a child care center to expand its services to infants.
- Funding the renovation and reopening of a child care center damaged during a hurricane.

Before- and After-School Projects. Most States used the 25 percent portion of CCDBG funds to provide before- and after-school services to children attending part-time early childhood development programs, kindergarten, elementary, or secondary school classes. Grantees created extensive and inclusive community networks to provide these child care services.

The funds supported an equal number of new and already established programs. In developing new before- and after-school projects, Grantees collaborated with park and recreation authorities, local schools, churches, Head Start programs, YMCAs, scout groups, and 4-H Clubs. Some States funded conferences to strengthen collaborative efforts between leaders from public and private community organizations and school district personnel. Others funded the creation of local community coalitions to address the expansion and improvement of school-age child care. Again, CCDBG's flexibility allowed the targeting of services to meet special needs. About half of the States funded special projects, such as those serving children and youth with disabilities or homeless children living in shelters.

Examples of Activities to Expand Before- and After-School Projects

- Providing grants to county Cooperative Extension offices to develop before- and after-school services in rural communities for school-age children.
- Expanding before- and after-school child care services in a homeless shelter to enable parents to attend job training classes.
- Creating family resource centers at public schools that offer after-school and Saturday programs where students can receive remedial education and tutoring.
- Supporting a local association of retarded citizens in establishing a new after-school program for children who are mentally retarded, developmentally delayed, physically impaired, or have a behavioral disorder.
- Developing a bilingual after-school recreation program designed to help children resist involvement with drugs and violence.

Improving the Quality of Child Care

Child Care Resource and Referral Projects. Child Care Resource and Referral agencies help parents select child care services, obtain financial assistance, and access quality child care. They also provide technical assistance to providers, community agencies, and businesses. Many maintain statistical information about the quality, supply, and demand for child care services, and some manage vouchers and certificate payment programs.

Over three-quarters of the States used CCDBG 25 percent funds to support the development of the CCR&Rs. Examples of activities include:

- offering start-up and expansion grants to CCR&Rs;
- developing a statewide computer network(s);
- promoting provider and family use of CCR&Rs;
- offering training and technical assistance to existing CCR&Rs.

About one-third of the States used CCDBG funds as "seed money" to help attract private funds for CCR&Rs. These funds were then used to develop new CCR&Rs in unserved areas and to support existing CCR&Rs. Employers, philanthropic groups, the public sector, and community organizations often played an ongoing role with the CCR&Rs through capital development, consultation, parent education, and provider training.

A small number of States used CCDBG funds to collect data through the CCR&Rs. Examples of their data collection efforts include conducting market rate surveys, feasibility studies on liability insurance, community needs assessments, and statewide planning for services.

Examples of Child Care Resource and Referral Projects to Improve the Quality of Child Care

- Funding additional CCR&R staff positions and expanded physical space to allow CCR&Rs to administer the CCDBG and At-Risk programs.
- Developing and distributing consumer education materials statewide.
- Hiring a community development specialist to provide technical assistance to existing and new CCR&Rs.
- Supporting the development of a CCR&R computer network and database.
- Developing a CCR&R accreditation process, a policy manual, an instrument to assess the effectiveness of local CCR&Rs, and a system for data collection.

Grant and/or Loans to Providers. Almost two-thirds of the States report using 25 percent funds to make grants and loans to help providers meet applicable State and local child care standards, licensing and regulatory requirements, and health and safety requirements. These Grantees have used the flexibility of these grants and loans to help increase the supply and quality of child care, especially among family child care providers.

Providers are using the grants and loans in a variety of ways: (1) to purchase equipment and materials, (2) make minor facility improvements, (3) maintain licensing standards, (4) seek accreditation, and (5) finance start-up costs or increase their service capacity. For a family child care home that is licensed to care for a small number of children, for example, the grant or loan could be used to renovate the home so that it meets licensing standards and can serve a larger number of children.

Examples of Grants and/or Loans to Providers to Improve the Quality of Child Care

- Creating a partnership with a large regional bank to develop a zero-interest loan program that center- and family-based child care programs and facilities can tap for funding.
- Providing grants for renovations and repairs to help child care facilities meet State licensing standards.
- Providing grants to allow child care providers to purchase developmentally appropriate toys and educational materials.
- Helping low-income family child care providers, especially those in high service-demand areas, with start-up grants and other grants to help them meet regulatory or licensing requirements.
- Providing grants for renovations to make family child care wheelchair accessible.

Improving Monitoring and Enforcement. The legislation authorizing CCDBG acknowledged the importance of State monitoring and enforcement for maintaining high quality child care services. About three-fourths of the States used the 25 percent funds to improve their child care licensing efforts and/or to develop or carry out consumer education initiatives.

With regard to licensing, most States chose to use the funds to increase the number of State and county child care licensing staff. The majority of States funded activities to encourage additional providers to become licensed. For family child care providers, they offered orientation sessions, start-up kits, and handbooks. They also provided a variety of other incentives to encourage child care centers to become licensed or registered.

Working with local community organizations, several Grantees developed and implemented consumer education programs to help parents make decisions on selecting quality child care. These efforts include:

- developing and disseminating fact sheets, brochures, and handbooks explaining the components of high quality child care;
- staffing centralized toll-free information numbers or complaint hot lines;
- developing public service announcements (PSAs) and videos;
- developing and disseminating materials for non-English speakers on how to purchase quality care.

Several States set up centrally located family resource centers to provide "one-stop" services for families to access child care and other family support services. For example, in several States, the

resource centers provided child care on the premises while parents completed the paperwork necessary for obtaining desired services. They also offered materials on parenting, appropriate child development activities, and conflict resolution.

Examples of Monitoring and Enforcement Activities to Improve the Quality of Child Care

- Funding the development of a registration process for in-home providers, including provider background checks and child abuse registry clearance.
- Hiring additional licensing consultants and supervisors to reduce the caseloads of child care staff.
- Offering training to child care licensing inspectors to improve and standardize inspection practices.
- Mounting a statewide, multi-media public awareness campaign to increase parents' ability to recognize and select quality child care providers for their children.
- Hiring staff to operate a statewide parent complaint hotline.

Training and Technical Assistance. Training and technical assistance are an important source of support to child care providers. Virtually all Grantees use 25 percent funds to provide training and technical assistance to child care center and family child care home staff. Training often focused on helping providers work more effectively with infants and toddlers and children with special needs.

Many Grantees chose to use the 25 percent funds to offer a credentialing program to their child care providers. Others have used the funds to encourage child care providers' efforts to meet accreditation standards.

The various training and technical assistance activities ranged from developing centralized points of access for services, such as family resource centers, to creating a variety of types of training materials, including manuals, curriculum guides, and video programs for distance learning.

Examples of Activities to Support Training and Technical Assistance to Improve the Quality of Child Care

- Offering grandparents and relative caregivers training opportunities and materials to help them care for children who are at risk of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment, or who were born to substance-abusing parents.
- Developing model classrooms where providers and their children participate in state-of-the-art child development practices.
- Operating and publicizing a telephone voice mail system that allows providers to call in and hear messages about upcoming training events.
- Designing a comprehensive training program that subsidizes provider participation, tracks training attendance, and recognizes providers who have completed the training.
- Creating and operating a toy, music, book, and resource material lending library with age-appropriate learning materials for families and family child care homes.

Compensation. Recognizing that improving the quality of child care requires adequate compensation levels, CCDBG regulations allow 25 percent funds to be used to improve provider salaries and other compensation. Almost one-third of the Grantees funded projects that addressed compensation.

A handful of States initiated studies on child care compensation and set up committees to develop career ladders for child care staff. Others offered incentives to family child care providers and center staff for meeting accreditation standards or for successfully completing the requirements to obtain a credential. Still another common method of supporting child care providers was to provide stipends to help defray the cost of attending conferences and child development courses at community colleges.

Examples of Efforts to Improve the Compensation of Child Care Providers

- Paying "quality incentives" to providers who meet higher accreditation standards.
- Providing stipends to allow child care providers to attend training sessions.
- Contracting a study to recommend specific strategies to address provider compensation.
- Developing a pilot project to increase salaries for trained child care providers.
- Creating and supporting a student loan assumption program for child care providers who pursue degrees in early childhood education.

Conclusion

The 25 percent CCDBG funds have been an effective tool for enabling States to support projects to improve the quality and expand the availability of child care services. The projects described in this summary report provide a glimpse of the innovation and creativity that States have shown in using these funds. A companion document, available from the Administration for Children and Families contains State-by-State descriptions of the activities States sponsored in 1993.